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**THE  
GENESIS  
OF THE  
BRITISH  
ASSOCIATION  
OF  
PAEDIATRIC  
SURGEONS**

**WRITTEN BY  
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We are pleased to have been given the opportunity of supporting the publication of this History of the British Association of Paediatric Surgeons in view of the close relationship that necessarily exists between surgeons and instrument makers.

Downs have been meeting surgeons' instrument needs for both new and current patterns since 1857.

Sir Denis Browne, the first President of the British Association of Paediatric Surgeons, introduced many new instruments and his needles, needleholders, raspatories and congenital deformity splints are widely accepted. We are pleased to have been able to serve him; he made demands of manufacturers only in the interests of his charges, who were his first concern.

We hope to serve all those Paediatric Surgeons who devote their skills to the advancement of care and treatment to young sufferers.

#### DOWN'S SURGICAL PLC



CB-023-01-S  
Scott Intestinal Clamp, straight, neonate and infant, 6½in (175mm)



Denis Browne's, stainless steel Needle Holder with nickel-plated handle



CB-023-02-U  
Scott Intestinal Clamp, angled 30°, neonate and infant, 6½in (175mm)



MD-195-01-U  
Bisset Paediatric Chest Retractor, with slightly curved arms, satin finish



JM-301-22-Y  
Micro-Fine Scissors, fine, curved blades, titanium, 5½in (140mm)

# The Genesis of the British Association of Paediatric Surgeons

At the turn of this century (Sir) William Osler wrote "The organisation of societies for the study of particular diseases has been of late a very notable feature in the professional life of this country . . . . These societies stimulate work, promote good fellowship and aid materially in maintaining the standard of professional scholarship".

*from 'Counsels & Ideals' 1905.*

Before embarking on the History of the British Association of Paediatric Surgeons, the 'B.A.P.S.', it may be of interest to mention briefly some of the paediatric clubs which existed in Britain from the beginning of this century.\*

In 1900, the Society for the Study of Children's Diseases was founded in London. Sir Humphrey Rolleston and Dr. Parkes Weber were active members and added lustre to the discussions.

In 1903, Dr. Moreland McCrae (1877-1941), a general practitioner, started the Children's Clinical Club, the 'C.C.C.'. He was a clinical assistant to Dr. G. A. Sutherland, physician at the Paddington Green Hospital. This Club, based in London, consisted of "about a dozen medical consultants interested in children"; Dr John Thomson of Edinburgh was a member, others included Sir Thomas Barlow, Samuel Gee, Dr. Eustace Smith, Dr. J. A. Coutts, Dr. W. B. Cheadle and Dr. Hector Cameron, all of London. The meetings were held in each other's houses and later led to the formation of the Children's Section of the Royal Society of Medicine, London.

In 1922, the Edinburgh and Glasgow Paediatric Club was formed to become later the Scottish Paediatric Society. There was, also, about that time, a 'Provincial Children's Club'.

1928 saw the creation of the British Paediatric Association; this was largely due to the enthusiasm and persuasion of Dr. Donald Paterson, who when in Canada was impressed by the value of the American

\*Hector Cameron's History of the British Paediatric Association 1928-1952.

Paediatric Society formed in 1920 and by the number of new schools of paediatrics being established in the United States. He came to England at a time when special departments of Diseases of Children were being formed. By 1928, this speciality called for research, teaching and practice in the medical schools, which could not be undertaken in isolation. Sir Frederick Still (1868-1941) became its first distinguished president. Hector Cameron in his history of British Paediatric Association 1928-1952, alludes to the spelling of "paediatrics" with 'ae' in the first syllable. Still, a classical scholar, approved of its correctness and this helped to persuade him to take the President's Chair. His practice in London was devoted entirely to children and in his spare time his interest in medical history resulted in his classic volume "History of Paediatrics" (1931). The B.P.A. continues today as a flourishing society having a membership of about 1500 paediatricians with only a small number of pathologists and surgeons.

The Scottish Surgical Paediatric Club was created in 1948; its meetings were held in Scottish cities, Carlisle and Belfast. The founder members consisted of (Sir) H. A. Thomas Fairbank, Matthew White, Norman Dott and Gertrud Herzfeld; Wallace Dennison was its Honorary Secretary for eleven years – and was the *only* office bearer. (Sir) Ian Fraser of Belfast, T. Twisington Higgins of London and J. P. Shanley of Dublin were honorary members.

### **Genesis of the B.A.P.S.**

Shortly after World War II, a few young paediatric surgeons independently visited centres in the United States and Europe to assess the climate of paediatric surgery and learn about its advances. Among these was David Vervat; who shortly after his appointment at the Sophia Hospital in Rotterdam as paediatric surgeon also visited the U.S.A. and stayed for short periods in various clinics, including those of Willis Potts in Chicago and those of Robert Gross and Ovar Swenson then in Boston. Later, he became acquainted with the surgical work at the Hospital for Sick Children in London; there he met Peter Rickham, Harold Nixon and John Bentley who were then Registrars. David Waterston had been established already as the consultant paediatric surgeon at Great Ormond Street. By his travels, Vervat was so impressed with the many contacts he made with those engaged in paediatric surgery that he thought that an international

society of this speciality would be welcomed especially amongst surgeons working in isolation. In 1951, with his colleagues from the Netherlands he visited some of the Scottish and English paediatric centres. Vervat was accompanied by Mak Schoorl of Amsterdam, J. D. Bom of The Hague and Jannice V. Walbech; in Scotland they met J. Mason Brown and Andrew Laird, Wallace Dennison, F. H. Robarts and others. At Sheffield they visited Robert Zachary and at Liverpool they saw the work of Isabella Forshall and Peter Rickham at the Alder Hey Hospital.

In the absence of detailed records, one can only surmise that informal discussions took place in the early 1950's among childrens' surgeons to decide whether an Association of Paediatric Surgeons should be launched; should this be a national or an international society? Should all disciplines of paediatric surgery be included, such as radiologists, anaesthetists and others? Where should the society be based – in England or Scotland? Should only 'pure' paediatric surgeons be admitted? At that time Peter Rickham envisaged an international Association of Surgeons who were engaged solely in paediatric surgery.



*Left to Right, Standing - G. R. Wallgren, R. H. Percival, V. Suvain, M. Sularono  
Sitting - H. H. Nixon, H. R. Lynn, R. B. Zachary, D. J. Waterston, J. Forshall,  
D. Broome, D. D. Vervat. Inset - P. P. Rickham.*

In October 1952 (Sir) Denis Browne, 'D.B.', the doyen of paediatric surgery, was a guest in Chicago at the Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Paediatrics. Also, Robert Zachary, David Waterston and Peter Rickham delivered lectures at that Congress.

Apparently, one of the topics of conversation among the British quartet in Chicago was the foundation of a Society of Childrens' Surgeons and this informal exchange of ideas among these 'Paedocrats at the Breakfast Table' led to a meeting in London one year later. During these intervening twelve months the climate of opinion on this project was sought from individual surgeons both in Britain and overseas. In the early 1950's only fifty to sixty paediatric surgeons existed in the world; all these were approached.

In November 1953 this special meeting was held at the Hospital for Sick Children with Denis Browne as chairman. After prolonged discussion his forceful enthusiasm and persuasion resulted in the decision "to form a Society of Surgeons in Great Britain interested in paediatric surgery"; this society to be called "The British Association of Paediatric Surgery" with overseas members. The executive committee was:

Chairman, Denis Browne

Executive Committee consisting of

J. J. Mason Brown, Edinburgh, H. H. Nixon, Carshalton,  
D. J. Waterston, London and P. P. Rickham, Liverpool

Hon. Sec. D. J. Waterston and Hon Treasurer P. P. Rickham

Thus, the B.A.P.S. came into being with (Sir) Denis Browne as its worthy Founder President. So with the help of his associates it began its promising career. Furthermore, David Vervat's idea was realised and Peter Rickham's conception of a world wide association began to evolve.

The *objects* of the newly formed B.A.P.S. were:-

1. The advancement of the study, practice and research in paediatric surgery.
2. The promotion of the teaching of paediatric surgery, both under-graduate and post-graduate and advice on the training of Paediatric Surgeons.

3. Advice on matters concerning the paediatric surgical services in the British Isles.
4. The promotion of friendship with Paediatric Surgeons overseas.

In the 1950's there were only a score of surgeons in Great Britain engaged *solely* in paediatric work, the majority of these were in Scotland whereas many of the surgeons in the rest of the British Isles undertook children's surgery in addition to their adult work. This diversity of practice presented difficulty in deciding who would be eligible for membership of the B.A.P.S., for many of the general surgeons had contributed much to the progress of children's surgery.

It was finally decided to divide the membership into four categories thus:

1. Ordinary Members shall be Surgeons largely engaged in paediatric surgical practice or Surgeons who have made contributions to paediatric surgery.
2. Members of Council shall be Surgeons engaged entirely in paediatric surgical practice.
3. Honorary Members shall be Surgeons who have made an outstanding contribution to paediatric surgery.
4. Overseas Members shall be Paediatric Surgeons who are resident outside the British Isles.

The membership fee would be £1 annually.

"The hallmark of a good conference is that people come away from it with a better appreciation of their ignorance of the subject than they had before they went to it".

B.M.J. 1972

*The Inaugural Meeting* of the B.A.P.S. was held from 30th June to 2nd July 1954 at the Royal College of Surgeons of England, Lincoln's Inn Fields London and at the Hospital for Sick Children, Great Ormond Street.

At this premiere, the President, Denis Browne, welcomed the members and visitors to its first meeting. Overseas delegates came from Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Holland, Italy, Scandinavia, South Africa and the United States. Many of these made their first



personal appearance in London, and some who were already well known by their writings were to become familiar figures at subsequent meetings of the Association.

First Denis Browne introduced two of his favourite subjects as "lecture-discussions", first on "Congenital Malformations of the Rectum & Anus" and then "Mechanical Origin of Deformities". Next Robert Zachary (Sheffield) outlined the use of surgical and conservative treatment of Acute Intussusception.

Dr. Orvar Swenson (Boston U.S.A.) presented the Simpson Smith Lecture on "Congenital Defects in the Pelvic Sympathetic System". This eponymous annual lecture is under the auspices of the Institute of Child Health, University of London and being of surgical interest was usually delivered at one of the B.A.P.S. meetings.

All the above lectures were published in the Archives of Disease in Childhood (Volume XXX, Feb. 1955). By the courtesy of the Editors, I. A. B. Cathie and Richard Dobbs, Reports of the Papers Read at the B.A.P.S. were included in a "Surgical Number" of that journal for the next few years.

The next morning's subject for discussion concerned "Cardio-Oesophageal Syndrome in Childhood" and "Hiatus Hernia". The former was presented by Isabella Forshall (Liverpool) and the latter by David Waterston (London). (Arch. Dis. Child. 1955, Vol. XXX)

A talk entitled "The Surgery of Conjoined Twins", illustrated by film, was given by Professor Ian Aird, London. This included his case of the conjoined Kano twins, one of which survived the separation (Brit. Med. Jour. 1954, i, 831-837).

On the third day, three papers on conditions affecting the neonate were presented: Harold Nixon on "Intestinal Obstruction", Peter Rickham on "Peritonitis" and Theodore E. Ehrenpreis (Stockholm) on "Hirschsprung's Disease in the Neonatal Period". All these subjects are still of topical interest in the present day scientific programmes.

The afternoon sessions were mostly devoted to Ward demonstrations of cases and television viewing of operations relayed from the operating theatre at the Hospital for Sick Children. Also, exhibitions and displays, mostly by surgical instrument and drug firms, was on view.

The Social Programme included the President's and Lady Moyra Brown's "At Home" at the famous "Garrick Club" in London and the final event was the Annual Dinner held in the historic "Apothecaries Hall". "As a token of the traditional friendship between our peoples in general and our paediatric surgeons in particular", the Scandinavian overseas members presented the Association with a President's gavel.

Thus ended the successful inaugural meeting of the B.A.P.S., which set the pattern for the years to come.

Valentine Swain  
1981

On behalf of the B.A.P.S. I would like to thank Mr. Geoffrey Down and his firm Downs Surgical for their generous help in publishing this contribution. Some members of that well known establishment knew Sir Denis Browne and were well acquainted with his inventive genius and were literally instrumental in perfecting his ideas.

Since the foundation of the B.A.P.S. in 1953 the Association has grown into a large international body consisting of some 650 members, a hundred of whom work in the U.K. and the rest are distributed among sixty different countries. The aim of the B.A.P.S. in the words of its first President is "to set a standard rather than establish a monopoly".

V.A.J.S.